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Typed 3 June 1963

NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT : Responsibility for Overflights of Denied Areas

1. With the inception of the U-2 program for the overflight of denied areas in 1955, it was decided by highest authority that CIA would be responsible for such operations. Since that time CIA has conducted 372 overflights over the Soviet Union, Communist China, European Satellites, the Middle East, Southeast Asia including the Sino-Indian border and Indonesia. This program has been conducted with the loss of only [redacted]

[redacted] Powers' flight over Soviet Russia [redacted]

The aircraft overflight program was supplemented in 1961 by satellite reconnaissance which was until recently also under the operational control of CIA.

2. The only 2 deviations from this procedure of CIA control during the 7 years in which the program has been active have been the high and low-level overflights over Cuba beginning in October 1962 when these became overt operations and [redacted]

[redacted] These two programs have been under the control of the JRC.

3. The direction of these operations has been carried out by a small group of highly experienced Air Force officers and CIA civilians using an operations center in CIA Headquarters. This group has direct and extremely rapid and secure communications to the units in the field, whether they are based at Edwards, the home base of the CIA U-2 unit, or at [redacted]

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0140-63
Page 2

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a wide variety of deployment bases overseas. In accordance with agreements worked out with the JCS and the Air Force, it has been possible to obtain very rapid military support for these operations using streamlined procedures. As a consequence, it has been possible to carry out operations in response to requirements developed by USIB and approved by the Special Group and highest authority rapidly and in a highly secure manner which also provides a degree of plausible denial to the United States Government. The importance of the intelligence which has been acquired by these operations over the past seven years cannot be overemphasized.

4. In developing the present NRO Agreement, it was clearly understood and so stated in paragraph III A. that the NRO would make maximum use of the appropriate technical and operational capabilities and resources of the DOD and CIA. The placement of the JRC in control of operations for the NRO does not appear consistent with the maximum use of CIA resources. A more appropriate system would appear to involve assigning the responsibility to the JRC as it presently exists for control of overflights suitable for military control as are presently agreed between the DCI and the Secretary of Defense. Similarly, the present assignment of responsibility for control of all covert overflights should be continued with the CIA using its present method of operation. These two programs could then be monitored and co-ordinated by a very small group in the NRO Staff.

JOHN A. McCONE
Director

Signature Recommended:

Signed Herbert Scoville, Jr.

Herbert Scoville, Jr.

DD/R

ODDR:HScoville (3 June 1963)

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